

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims**

Claims 1-34 (Canceled).

Claim 35 (New) A method of increasing abiotic stress tolerance in a plant, said method comprising transforming said plant with a recombinant vector comprising a polynucleotide sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO: 1 or a variant thereof coding for a polypeptide sequence as shown in SEQ ID NO: 2 to yield transformed plants.

Claim 36 (New) The method of claim 35, wherein said plant used for transformation is selected from a group consisting of tobacco, rice and tomato plant.

Claim 37 (New) The method of claim 35, wherein said method provides transformed plants having increased tolerance to cold stress.

Claim 38 (New) The method of claim 35, wherein said method provides transformed plants having increased tolerance to drought stress.

Claim 39 (New) The method of claim 35, wherein said method provides transformed plants having increased tolerance to salt stress.

Claim 40 (New) A transgenic plant, plant tissue or plant cell produced by the method of claim 35, wherein said transformed plant, plant tissue or plant cell exhibits increased tolerance to cold stress.

Claim 41 (New) A transgenic plant, plant tissue or plant cell produced by the method of claim 35, wherein said transformed plant, plant tissue or plant cell exhibits increased tolerance to drought stress.

Claim 42 (New) A transgenic plant, plant tissue or plant cell produced by the method of claim 35, wherein said transformed plant, plant tissue or plant cell exhibits increased tolerance to salt stress.

Claim 43 (New) Transgenic seeds produced by the transgenic plant of claim 40.

Claim 44 (New) Transgenic seeds produced by the transgenic plant of claim 41.

Claim 45 (New) Transgenic seeds produced by the transgenic plant of claim 42.